

CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN TENNESSEE

The TNKIDS Initiative

TNKIDS is a continuing effort to better coordinate and improve services for children. The goal is to give all children the opportunity to be successful in life by offering a safe, healthy start and an excellent education. Collaborating within State government to accomplish this goal are the Departments of Health, Children's Services, Human Services, Education, Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, as well as the Commission on Children and Youth, and the Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. The TNKIDS component of the Health Information Tennessee Web site is one of the ways in which information sharing and exchange across State agencies can respond to and support Governor Sundquist's challenge to offer every child in the State a safe, healthy start and an excellent education.

The TNKIDS departments have been working with the Community Health Research Group (CHRG) to establish the TNKIDS component of the Health Information Tennessee (HIT) Web site. This Web site, using innovative interactive programming, contains:

- State and county health-related data
- Tennessee Kids Count reports
- Links to National Kids Count data
- Information similar to Kids Count data from the departments participating in the TNKIDS Initiative
- County and census tract mapping of geocoded information
- Extensive data specific to particular departments, including education and safety.

Some of the critical issues for children's health and well-being are addressed on HIT TNKIDS and will be summarized here.

Children in Poverty in Tennessee

Poverty among Tennessee's children is declining.

- ! One measure of poverty is the percent of children ages 1-17 receiving food stamps. Since 1996, this percentage has declined by 16.8%, from 21.4% to 17.8% in 1998.
- In 1998, counties with the highest percentage of children receiving food stamps were Hancock County (36%), McNairy County (35.7%), and Scott County (34.5%). Those with the lowest prevalence of children receiving food stamps are Rutherford and Williamson Counties, at 7.3% and 4.9%, respectively.